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Southern District of Texas**

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**LAST OF FIVE IN CUSTODY IN SEX TRAFFICKING CASE CONVICTED
AND BROTHER, JUAN CARLOS SALAZAR, SENTENCED**

The sixth defendant and alleged leader of trafficking group, "El Gallo," remains a fugitive.

HOUSTON, TX – The last of five Mexican nationals charged for their roles in a conspiracy to smuggle minor girls and young women from Mexico into the United States and using deception, threats of harm, physical force and psychological coercion to compel their service as prostitutes in Houston area bars was convicted, United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle and Assistant Attorney General Wan Kim, Civil Rights Division, United States Department of Justice, announced today.

At today's re-arraignment hearing, Ivan Salazar, 19, a Mexican national, pleaded guilty to transporting young women and minors that were smuggled into the United States then coerced into engaging in commercial sex acts. He admitted being paid to transport the Mexican women and young girls from apartments where they were housed to local area bars where they were compelled and coerced to work, sometimes as prostitutes. The apartments were leased by members of the conspiracy.

Ivan Salazar is set to be sentenced on October 30, 2006, and faces a maximum penalty of ten years imprisonment, and a \$250,000 fine and is subject to deportation following his release from prison.

During today's re-arraignment hearing, the United States informed the court it could prove that Ivan Salazar transported Mexican women and girls to the compelled service of Houston area bars for the purposes of prostitution, including a then-juvenile, identified publicly only as MRG. On one occasion in June 2005, Ivan Salazar retrieved a juvenile girl, identified in court as RAO, who had escaped from the conspirators, and returned her to the compelled service of the organization. He also admitted having transported RAO to obtain a false identification card to avoid detection and apprehension by law enforcement authorities.

Ivan Salazar and his co-conspirators also instructed the women on how to service the clients and prohibited the women from conversing with each other or their clients. The conspirators required the Mexican girls and women to turn over their prostitution proceeds to the conspirators for the financial benefit of the conspirators.

The evidence would have also demonstrated that, in order to achieve the women and girls' compliance, Ivan Salazar, along with his co-conspirators, threatened the women and girls and created a climate of fear to compel and maintain their prostitution.

At previous held re-arraignment hearings, the other four defendants also admitted to evidence demonstrating their involvement in this sex trafficking group.

With Ivan Salazar's conviction today, five of the six persons charged in the fall of 2005 for their involvement in this sex trafficking enterprise have been convicted and two are awaiting sentencing. The sixth defendant, Gerardo Salazar, Ivan's father, also known as "El Gallo," 40, the alleged leader of the organization, remains a fugitive. Also convicted and sentenced for the felony conspiracy charge are Angel Moreno Salazar, 24, convicted on Monday, February 6, 2006, and sentenced to 51 months imprisonment on July 17, and his brother, Jose Luis Moreno Salazar, 20, convicted on February 3, 2006, and sentenced to 60 months imprisonment on July 17. Salvador Fernando Molina Garcia, 37, was convicted following his guilty plea on January 17, 2006, and sentenced to 60 months imprisonment on July 17. All of these defendants are Mexican nationals.

In a separate hearing today, Ivan Salazar's brother, Juan Carlos Salazar, 21, convicted on January 17, 2006, was sentenced to 60 months in federal prison.

Juan Carlos Salazar also admitted recruiting women and girls for prostitution in Mexico and in Houston area bars, housing the women in Houston area apartments, and holding them in service through coercion. Juan Carlos Salazar specifically admitted that in early 2004, he placed a woman known as "Katrina" into prostitution in Houston area bars, driving "Katrina" and other women in the compelled service of the organization to Houston area bars to work as prostitutes, and collecting the proceeds of their labor for the benefit of the conspirators.

The indictment in this case is the result of an investigation conducted by the member agencies of the Human Trafficking Rescue Alliance (HTRA) in Houston, Texas, including: the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Texas Alcohol and Beverage Commission (TABC) and the Harris County Sheriff's Office.

A warrant remains outstanding for the arrest of Gerardo Salazar. Anyone having information about the whereabouts of Gerardo Salazar, a.k.a. "El Gallo" is urged to contact the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Houston, Texas, at (713) 693-5000 or their nearest FBI office. A photograph of this fugitive is attached.

Anyone having knowledge of others subjected to similarly described conduct is urged to contact the Houston office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation at the above number or the Human Trafficking Rescue Alliance through the Houston office of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement at 281-774-4900.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Ruben R. Perez and Joe Magliolo of the United States Attorney's Office of the Southern District of Texas, and Trial Attorneys Lou DeBaca and Jennifer Dominguez of the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division.

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